Education as Affective: Making Visual Journals during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT
This paper considers the pedagogical and research potential of visual journals to uncover the affective in education. Spurred by the sudden instructional shift from in-person learning to asynchronous instruction, visual journals were utilized in order to understand student experience of the pandemic and to consider whether education as usual was possible after significant affective and material societal shifts happening at the early stages of the pandemic. Massumi's (2015) notion of affective threat is utilized along with affect theory in order to uncover the affective realm of education during the pandemic and therefore the latent affective realm of education.

KEYWORDS: Visual Journal, Affect, Covid-19, Affective Threat, Massumi, Art Education

> What is, is a refrain. A scoring over a world's repetitions. A scratching on the surface of rhythms, sensory habits, gathering materialities, intervals, and durations. A gangly accrual of slow or sudden accretions. A rutting by scoring over.
>
> Refrains are a worlding. Nascent forms quicken, rinding up like skin of an orange. Pre-personal intensities lodge in bodies. Events, relations, and impacts accumulate as the capacities to affect and be affected. Public feelings world up as lived circuits of action and reaction.
>
> —Kathleen Stewart, Afterword: Worlding Refrains

This paper details research of an affective and curricular shift in a second level university art education class during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the class is open to all upper-level students in the university's College of Liberal arts, the students discussed in the paper are preservice art education students.[1] The research in this paper took place at the beginning of the COVID-19

1 This research project underwent institutional review prior to beginning the project and informed consent was obtained from the students.

pandemic, when lockdowns preceded the horrific realities of the disease and when many were questioning the real threat (and later the reality itself) of the virus. Locked safely in our homes, we watched remotely as New York and Italy experienced a surge of hospitalizations as infection rates rose and their once-bustling streets turned desolate. Conversely, and probably in large part because of the lockdowns, infection rates remained rather low in our region (six months later, those infection rates would skyrocket and our region would become a hot spot). During the lockdown what we experienced was not as much the effects of the pandemic as its affective threat. In the beginning our region did not experience high rates of infection, yet we acted as though we did, invoking lockdowns, experiencing fear, and exercising caution. When discussing the affective threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) argued by the Bush administration as justification for the second Iraq War, Massumi (2010) describes affective threat as having potential to effect change or exert force in much the same way that an actual or real experience might, but that it need not ever be real. He argues that, despite never finding evidence of WMD's, the Bush administration's threat produced the same affect of actual weapons. Note here the use of affect instead of effect. Although one might argue that the initial threat of WMD's produced similar military and material effects -waging war against Iraq and Afghanistan, affect refers to what is felt or produced through the body's experience of encounters, events, and relations. In other words, the threat of WMD's produced the same sense of anxiety that actual WMD's would have produced. This ontology speaks of an emotion's or feeling's ability to bring into being, to create reality, or affect things and beings.

Specifically, I describe an impromptu curricular shift brought on by the initial stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic during the spring semester of 2020 and how that shift revealed the affective register of both teaching and learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic and the subsequent hidden affective register of so-called normal teaching and learning practices. Thinking with Massumi (2010) and Stewart (2007a, 2007b), I turn to a logic of forces, intensities, impacts, and excesses intent on revealing the hidden or undetected affective register of education. I describe how I utilized visual journals as a way to ask questions of affect during a particularly isolating time of asynchronous online learning. Instead of trying to force the form and structure of online learning to conform to my pre-pandemic conception of art education, I turned to visual journaling and a series of emotion/affective questions to communicate to my students that this was not educational business as usual. I believed that, as students of art education and pedagogy, it was important for them to notice, to experience, and to consider how this affective shift impacted their education. It was equally as important that I allow the space to be vulnerable, to ask questions, and to lead by methodologically drawing attention to the affective register of their experience through the practice of visual journaling.

Background: COVID-19 Staging for Unveiling the Affective Register in Education

At the beginning of COVID-19 lockdowns in March 2020, my university left for spring break and, when we returned, we transitioned to asynchronous online teaching only. This was all done with very little university guidance and a high degree of uncertainty. Untethered and fearful, I was tasked with rewriting my curriculum and steering my students through the remainder of the semester. Doubtful that proceeding as usual was useful or possible, I sought out others that expressed similar feelings and were asking similar questions to mine: "How can students at an open access, research one institution pivot from in-person learning to online asynchronous learning with little institutional support?" This question in particular led me to ask additional questions that developed in response to what I personally knew about our students and what our university was telling us about them at that time. Namely, that because our students are often underprivileged and overscheduled, sometimes juggling families and jobs, we were to assume that they might not have the same (or any) access to the digital world that we, the academic elite, had. This led me to ask, "What is possible given these parameters?" and more importantly, "What is needed by my students?" So, rather than answering the question, "How can we use different instructional formats to deliver the same content?", I began to ask "What kinds of things should be taught, expressed, examined, or understood during a global pandemic?" and "Can and should education proceed as usual without attending to the emotional affective force of things where uncertainty, anxiety, fear, isolation, sickness, and death marked everyday experience?" This shift from questions of methodology and content to questions of use, appropriateness, and purpose reflects an affective change that reveals the force of the pandemic and ultimately works to make plain the affective force of education.

Theorizing Affect: Threat, Excess, and Affective Force

Over fifty years ago, well before the so-called affective turn (Clough, 2008), when historically surveying the field of art education, Arthur Efland (1971) declared yet another major art education transition, the "affective revolution" (p. 13). Citing previous historical shifts in art education from progressive, child-centered, "developmental activity" (p. 15) to a cognitive revolution involving the shoring-up of art education as a rational, distinguishable discipline with "recognized subject matter" (p. 15) unto itself, Efland (1971) describes a second evolution, one involving a consideration of affect in light of the failings of the cognitive revolution in education of the 1960's. Despite Efland's historical tocsin against it, he notes that these conceptions of education seemed to see-saw back and forth between separate notions of the cognitive and the affective. Contemporary affect theory, working from

the ideas of Spinoza (1959), moves beyond this educational practice of mind-body separation. According to Hardt (2007), Spinoza believed "that the mind and body are autonomous but that they … proceed or develop in parallel" (p. x). Hardt (2007) explains that this creates a consideration for research (and I submit for education and art education) that "each time we consider the mind's power to think, we must try to recognize how the body's power to act corresponds to it" (p. x).

Unlike most of cognitive views of (art) education, "affect unfolds in the plane of immanence, where bodies and things are seen in terms of their endless possibilities for the variations that are always underway" (Trafi-Prats, 2021, p. 213). These possible variations describe an excess that is beyond the mere cognitive and discursive and that deals in the comingling of perception and the body (Yıldız-Alanbay, 2020). This excess, therefore, is often undetected or too much for the educational system and, rather than focus on its expressions or forces, we miss or dismiss them.

While speaking specifically about perceived threats manufactured into being during the Bush administration's war on terror in the early to mid 2000s, Massumi's (2010) treatise holds much potential for thinking through (the threat and reality of) COVID-19 and its affective force on education. Affective force is something (or a phenomenon) felt, experienced, or undergone, often revealed through an emotional or sensible register that produces, disturbs, or uncovers. It is "the capacity to affect and be affected" (Massumi, 2015, p. ix). Massumi (2010) theorizes threat on the affective register as something that, through feeling, is willed into being (whether it actually comes to be or not):

> It [threat] will have been real because it was *felt* to be real. Whether the danger was existent or not, the menace was felt in the form of fear. What is not actually real can be felt into being. Threat does have an actual mode of existence: fear, as foreshadowing. Threat has an impending reality in the present. This actual reality is affective. (p. 54)

Likewise, the practice of art education may also prove useful as a way of being that could make plain approaches or methods that might lay bare these affective phenomena.

Situating Visual Journals in Research, Artistic, and Affective Practice

This study explores how visual journals might help researchers and educators to reveal this affective register. But first, what are visual journals? At first glance they appear similar to traditional artists' sketchbooks which can be used to explore, to play, to experiment, to work things out ahead of time; they could be considered to be spaces of planning, or pre-thinking. Despite being "a space for ideas to take shape, imaginations to wander, and drawing skills to be practiced" the problem with sketchbooks is that they are often conceived as "places designed solely for drawing" (Evans-Palmer, 2018, p. 19). Scott (2019) claims that sketchbooks, unlike journals, are not only limited by the kinds of drawing materials often employed in them (pencil, pen, charcoal), but also by the kinds of practices used in them (practicing drawing to hone drawing skills, coming up with or documenting ideas, or planning for artwork) which are often teacher-driven. Here the visual journal not only holds the potential for narrative or diaristic structures possible through the collaging of image and words (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2008), but they also have the potential to collage different practices within one literally bounded space. So, while a visual journal and sketchbook may appear similar (both involve artmaking practices within a bound booklet), it is the practice performed within the pages that can differentiate them.

We need only look toward the study of children's drawings to reveal a broader potential for sketchbooks as part of child-initiated artistic inquiry (Cinquemani & Souza, 2022; Lewis & Rhodes, 2022; Park, 2022; Schulte, 2013; Sunday, 2015; 2018; Sunday & Conley, 2020; Thompson, 1995; 1999; 2009; 2017; Thompson & Bales, 1991) and one that might more closely resemble visual journaling. Here sketchbook practices are not as rigidly defined as artists' sketchbooks; rather, children's sketchbooks exhibit possibilities for ethnographic research and children's research-like inquiry, including lines of flight and flights of fancy. Sunday (2015) explains, "Sketchbook time allows the children opportunities to explore their own self-generated ideas through graphic language, opening up spaces to transgress the boundaries of curriculum and to reveal their interests, experiences and unique perspectives of their worlds" (p. 8). Visual journals, like sketchbooks in early childhood art education, provide makers with possibilities to explore, create, and mold worlds – their residue bound in the pages.

Like traditional sketchbooks, visual journals can be used for teacher-directed purposes in classroom practices. Evans-Palmer (2018) discusses their reflective and curricular potential in university art education classes for elementary generalists. What separates visual journals from artist sketchbooks is not necessarily their possibility for directed practice, but rather what Scott (2019) explains is their diaristic quality or connection to written journals. They are intentionally designed to uncover the affective qualities of the everyday or the ordinary, "to provoke attention to forces that come into view" (Stewart, 2007b, p. 1) or "exercises in following out of the impact of things" (Berlant & Stewart, 2019, p. ix). A visual journal may be an attempt to open out the possibilities of what a bounded (as in collection of bound papers), inquiry-based, affective space can produce. It could serve as what

Thompson (2015) referred to as prosthetic spaces – "territory open to … exploration, available for recording the everyday or the unfamiliar, for pursuing personal projects, inscribing … memories of home and school, capturing fragments of cultural experience" (p. 556). The visual journal is a flexible, mutable space of possibility where forms unfold in relation to the practices and purposes of the practitioner.

Furthermore, visual journals are not exclusive to the visual arts or art education; their flexibility has meant that researchers in therapy fields have utilized its diaristic form to uncover affective or emotional states (Gibson, 2018; Mims, 2015; Mercer et al. 2010; Sackett & McKeeman, 2017). Likewise, visual journals have been used as reflective tools in educational or training settings (Deaver & McAuliffe, 2009; Loerts & Belcher, 2019) and in subject specific contexts like math (Kierans, 2011) and media education (Redmond, 2022). Visual journals also have a history of accompanying or weaving in and out of writing and research as a noted form of arts-based research (Messenger, 2016; Shields, 2016). Here the practice is often described as an autoethnographic (self-story) or a reflective practice which works in tandem with other research practices.

This study uses visual journals as both a pedagogical and research practice. The visual journal both acted in the place of university art education curriculum during impromptu curricular restructuring during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and the visual journal was also used as the direct site of research data collection. In other words, this is a study of how my students utilized visual journals during the pandemic to process excesses of education like loss, fear, isolation, timelessness, dread, and even hope or thankfulness, made plain during the pandemic, and how visual journals can be sites of research.

Methods, Practices, Pedagogy

My methodology came from a shift in my approach to curriculum in response to the affective force of the pandemic and my attempts to uncover affective excesses of education during the pandemic, as described by my students in visual journals and felt in my response to them. During the initial lockdown I felt emotionally unfit to perform normalized notions of teacher expertise, including confidence, calmness, and certainty. Because of this, on top of the distance, lack of connection, and confusion created by the remoteness of asynchronous learning, I opted to change direction and ask my students about their experience of the pandemic. I did this with the hope that they would see the opening that this created as a way to think about changes in education brought about by the pandemic which would ultimately reveal the affective force of education and present my students and myself with a deeper understanding of curriculum and pedagogy.

What I Asked My Students to Do

At the beginning of the semester reset, I emailed my students a letter that addressed my concerns about "teaching as usual" during the pandemic. I explained that I was pleased with the work they had already completed and that we should be careful with ourselves, each other, and our educational expectations. I tried to reassure and encourage them, but I was cautious not to lay too much at their feet. It was a balancing act, one that I was aware would be made more difficult through the distance of online learning and forced isolation. At the same time, I directed them to two blog posts that I thought were useful for navigating this changed approach. One by Brene Brown (March 22, 2020), called "Collective Vulnerability, the FFTs of Online Learning, and the Sacredness of Bored Kids", highlighted the inherent difficulty we all have with first times. The other by Rebecca Barrett-Fox (March 12, 2020), titled "Please do a bad job of putting your courses online", made room for the argument that maybe, just maybe, teachers (and students) might not need to pour their best into translating the dynamics of an in-person classroom into an online forum. Instead we might consider the online platform and the affective conditions of educating during the pandemic as important areas of educational and art educational study. In addition to these posts, I provided justification or context explaining why I was providing these resources. Namely, that this wasn't going to be business as usual, and that there was much to be learned from that and that this might be a critical, interstitial space in which we might witness or begin to "conceptualize affect as pre-individual bodily forces augmenting or diminishing a body's capacity to act" (Clough, 2008, p. 1). I also included a link to Erik Scott's video[2] introducing visual journaling, which provided a succinct definition and discussion of the difference between a sketchbook and a visual journal.

After sending these emails, I settled on completing the semester by asking my students to respond to a visual journal prompt once a week and to post their response to a corresponding weekly drop box on our class's course site. I asked them to upload to the course site because it seemed to be the primary mode of communication available, and I wanted there to be little confusion and frustration which might prevent our communication. The prompts were labeled and assigned to a specific week, and each prompt corresponded to a question of affect that I was experiencing and that I suspected my students were as well. These included: social isolation, online learning, what's missing (loss), fear, gratitude, and envisioning (the future) (see Table 1 for full question prompts). In all, I asked students to respond to six visual journal responses over the course of six weeks.

2 What is the visual journal? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDQBezh-DUkE

Week #	Title	Visual Journal Prompt
1	Social Isolation and COVID-19	After watching What is the Visual Journal- Erik Scott on YouTube, please visual journal about your initial thoughts and feelings about what is happening in your life relevant to the present situation we find ourselves in. This could be many things including but not limited to: • How you feel about being home alone or with children and/or a spouse • Issues of employment, productivity, income instability • Issues of health including yourself or those close to you • Feelings of anxiety, fear, boredom, restlessness • Issues of preparedness, information, confusion • Anything not listed that affects you because of corona virus/social distancing *Consider using materials that are only available in your home (or that might be available in your future student's homes- will they have paint? Charcoal? Pastels?) Consider working through your ideas using materials that are readily available. Can you use coffee grounds, food coloring, etc.? Consider what you could collage on to the page and how it will make meaning or connections to ideas. Consider drawing and writing as not only visual elements, but as ways to work through ideas, emotions, and thoughts.*
2	Online Learning	How do you feel about online learning (not just in this class)? What are the differences that you are noticing? What does it feel like to learn this way? *Consider processing your thoughts using different materials than you used last time. What other household items can you use?*
3	What's Missing?	What's missing? What do you need? What have you lost? What are you missing out on? What has been canceled, changed, deferred? Who do you miss? Who have you lost? *Consider how erasure might convey these ideas or how you might obscure or hide things during your process.*
4	Fear	Fear is quite real in these times. What are you fearful of? How often does fear affect you as a learner or in the other roles you fill in your life (as a parent, an employee, etc.) *Consider what kind of tone your entry might have when addressing fear. How will you convey this through process, material, content, color, penmanship/brush strokes, etc*?
5	Gratitude	What does this pandemic make you grateful for?
6	Envision	Imagine a better world after COVID-19. In what ways can we become better from this pandemic? What good do you envision from all this?

Table 1: *Six Assigned Visual Journal Prompts*

What I Did

In addition to rewriting the curriculum, composing emails, sharing links, and designing questions to address affective differences in education brought on by the pandemic lockdowns, I also considered

my experience of lockdowns as part of this research project. When students began to upload their responses to the course site, I responded right away by thanking them for their candor and encouraged them. But I was not always prompt with reviewing their submissions, and although I invited my students to email me with concerns and questions, I received almost no communication outside of their submissions. Much of what was being experienced by my students beyond the journal entries was hidden from me. It felt like a black box. I would send out transmissions letting my students know that I was available to support them and I would only hear back about what they were required to respond to as course content. This, coupled with my own difficult (crippling) pandemic emotions (anxiety, isolation, timelessness), created a feedback loop which made it difficult for me to respond to student submissions in a regular (timely and normative) fashion. I would often wait one or two weeks before re-engaging with their submissions – those negative feelings that started in restlessness and timelessness often manifested in dread-based avoidance. This is all to say that while I was questioning student experience of pandemic and educational affect, I was also undergoing it. So, in addition to studying the artifacts and self-reporting my students made during the pandemic, this project also involves autoethnographic elements of self-study- in particular, my response to student responses and my own affective response to the pandemic and our university's procedural dictates.

Shimmer as an Affective Methodology

The data discussed in this study largely consists of student visual journal responses to six assigned prompts that replaced the planned curriculum of my second level art education class. The prompts acted like interview questions in that they posed questions that the students were able to interpret and answer. Although, unlike the in-person interviews that characterize many research practices, the pandemic lockdown prevented an embodied verbal dialogue of question and response between two people in close proximity. Rather, the weekly prompts and visual journal acted as interview questions and responses in visual and written form. Note that this is where the diaristic possibility of the visual journal diverges from the purposes and potential of most traditional sketchbook practices. Here we can assume that students might engage with the bound book as a lively or shimmering prosthetic practice (Thompson, 2015), where visual journal responses could be considered not only an answer to the prompt but also self-exploration of or inquiry into the questions posed. Assuming that students engaged in this way, I then mined their visual journals for content revealing the liveliness and depth of their affective experience, searching for shimmers (Stewart, 2007a), glints, or gleaming points where affects aggregate to become noticeable and reveal themselves against an always already affective background.

The students were asked to create their responses in handbound sketchbooks we had created during in-person classes at the beginning of the semester. They were made of artist quality paper that we hand bound in repurposed, secondhand, hardback book covers. As part of the assignment, they were required to create their response in the visual journal, and they were encouraged to explore the potential, possibilities, and materiality of the sketchbook. They were then required to photograph each entry and to upload their visual responses as digital images to the class blackboard site. In addition to their visual responses, students often wrote small notes or made asides in the comments section provided by the assignment upload page. Others chose to compose additional correspondence in separate text documents. These correspondences were collected as data along with emails specific to the class. Additionally, I made note of my own affective response to my students' work and to my role and experience of teaching them during the early stages of the pandemic.

As a way to begin to organize the data, visual responses were compiled along with any corresponding additional writing. The responses were then sorted by weekly prompt and reviewed. This enabled me to see general themes across each prompt and to note differences. After reviewing the scope of responses for each week and noting an overall general sensibility, I regrouped the work chronologically beginning with week one and ending with week six for each student. I did this in order to build a holistic understanding of each student's work and to be able to consider each in relation to other students' responses and within the broader context of the whole class. While I was doing this, I was noting of the quality of each response (some seemed thinner than others in terms of consideration given to the content or form of the response). As part of this analysis, I tuned-in to my own experience of the pandemic, noting which and whose responses sparked or reverberated intensely against my own experience.

Rather than review their work for recurring themes that might iteratively saturate or aggregate to create a concept, a tactic used to generate themes and to produce a kind of evidentiary saturation in many qualitative research practices, my review of the students' works searched instead for shimmers, nodes, or peaks where an artistic or emotional intensity stood apart from the background flow of the quotidian. Rather than producing rhythms and through them confirming sameness, this research practice is one of attunement to "the flows, rhythms, and intensities" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, as cited by Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2010, p. xi).

The two journals discussed below were at once representative and resistant to the sameness of the whole. When viewed with and against the context of their peer's journals and within the context of my own pandemic experience, the works discussed below were selected because

in one way or another their content and form shimmered or gleamed differently, with flashes of wisdom. One's experimental novelty, joie de vivre, and humor shaking me from my own crippling pandemic melancholy and the other reminding me of the real, grave threat of the pandemic and its ability to shape our everyday experience of life and to likewise alter our experience of education.

Visual Journal Responses: Shimmers and Resonances

Many of the journal entries had an emotional or affective tone, meaning that the entries addressed students' feelings about COVID-19 or their feelings about their educational experience during the pandemic. They might also be considered affective in that they are artworks that were being used to "get at" what was experienced, felt (McClure, 2022; Springgay, 2018), or lived beyond the rational or linguistic or what Hickey-Moody (2013) might consider affective or "the capacity of art to effect a movement from invisibility to visibility, to make stories and publics" (p. 120).

Many of the responses were what you'd expect: typical responses to teacher-driven requests for artmaking that followed unexamined or underexamined practices of collage (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2008), where at best it is uncertain how invested the maker is in the meaning making practices, and at worst is simply performing the requirements of the assignments. Despite this, each response asked for student consideration of their affective experience of education and of COVID -19. In asking the students to tune in, to listen, to engage in "the commonplace, labor-intensive process of sensing modes of living as they come into being" (p. 340), this necessarily changed the affective quality of their everyday experience of education. It provided a space to explore the effects of educational affect. While these responses and the act of attuning or tuning in was a collective act, or a what Stewart (2007a) refers to as "a gathering place of accumulative dispositions… the gathering of experience beyond subjectivities", there were "shimmers" or affective responses that provided a "sharpening of attention to the expressivity of something coming into existence (or out of)" (p. 340) that would tug at me and, in the resonance they produced, reveal an affective layer. Despite the fact that there were few submissions and the limited correspondence we had surrounding them, the two visual journals discussed below were such shimmers, and they would take on "a new regime of sensation" and "threshold to the real" (Stewart, 2007a, p. 340) that resonated through my mind and body, revealing an affective politic of fear like those described by Massumi (2015), but also with possible implications for education.

Affective FEAR, the Body, and Asynchronous Isolation: L's Responses

Initially, L's journal entries did not stand out as all that different from her peers. Like them, she employed collage as her primary mode of engaging with the prompts and visual journal entries. She seemed to understand the practice of visual journaling using both visual and written means to explore and experience feelings on the page. Like her peers, she moved easily from utilizing one side of the journal to employing the full spread of two inside sheets, but used or discovered no unique, inventive possibilities of the journal beyond this. While her tactics and approach were typical, what was unusual was that she began to email me around the second week when the entries were due asking if she could submit them late. Because I was struggling myself to perform my own duties, I was happy to extend the deadline and didn't think much about the possible causes for why she might need an extension. L also asked for an extension for the third entry, and by the fourth, her last but not the class's, she had sent me a distressing email that she was in the hospital and would need some more time. In hindsight, her request for more time screams at me like a warning bell. However, at that time I did not really understand nor realize the poetics of her pleas.

Her sudden hospitalization was quite alarming, especially given her young age and seeming health. All she had said in her email was that she was in for tests. The lack of information I had then became the impetus to comb through her journal entries (as well as the emails) for signs of how long she had been struggling and for any indication of what she might be experiencing and suffering from. Of course, I feared the severities of COVID -19.

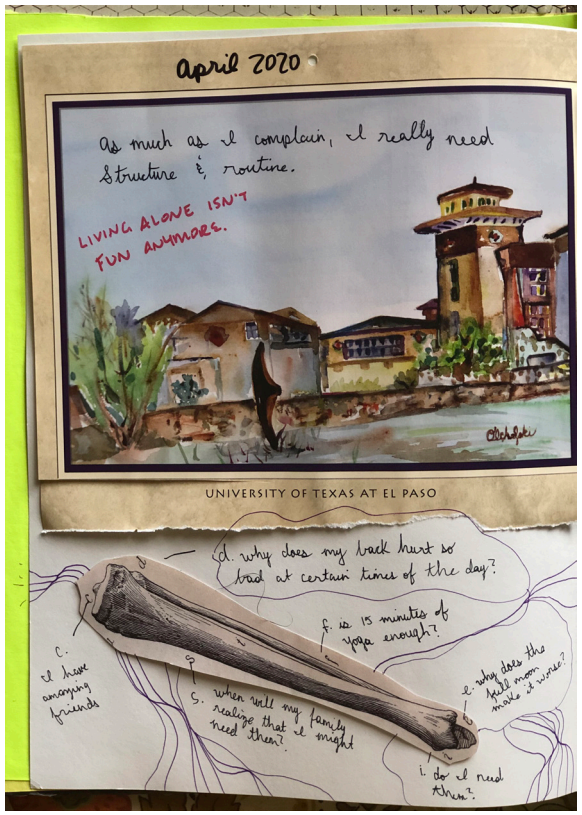

Figure 1. *L's visual journal response to "social isolation". Collaged anatomical bone against campus watercolor with anatomical labels replaced with questions.*

L's response to the first and second prompts (*social isolation* and *online learning,* respectively) offered little initial insight into her experience. Her social isolation response (see Figure 1) included a collaged watercolor of the college campus and an anatomical drawing of a tibia and fibula (both artist's works made by someone else). Radiating off the anatomical drawing was writing that looked like anatomical labels corresponding to letters on the drawing but on closer look were actually questions she posed to herself (and to me) regarding her own isolation such as: "c. I have annoying friends." "d. Why does my back hurt so bad at certain times of the day?" "e. Why does the full moon make it worse?" "f. Is 15 minutes of yoga enough?" "s. When will my family realize that I might need them?" "i. do I need them?" Initially I thought nothing of out of the (new) ordinary about these questions as they seemed on par with things that I was feeling and that others

indicated in their responses. Likewise, this entry was placed next to her second entry about online learning -something that the in lightness of her response indicated that she wasn't struggling with. Looking back the starkness of the black and white anatomical drawing set against the warm tones of the watercolor and the reference to anatomy and medicine made it seem significant – a harbinger of things to come.

Figure 2. *Left hand side of L's visual journal response to "What's Missing (loss)?". Collaged calendar, dog-like or large cat-like creatures with foreboding figure holding a cage and a web of words.*

Her third entry (see Figure 2) relating to the prompt, "What's missing (loss)?" was more telling. It consisted of a full spread of two internal pages that, despite addressing the same topic, seemed more like individual entries. On the left-hand side was a cut out section of a brown paper calendar that seemed to make up a foreground and built a kind of horizon line across the center of the page. Collaged on top of it were three figures. Two of a dog or large cat-like creature each with a word written across its torso: touch and freedom respectively. The third was a humanoid figure cloaked in robes and carrying a bird cage with an eye at the bottom. The gesture drawing of the hand holding the cage is repeated at the bottom of the figure and the figure's face seems to be

replaced with a row of teeth that creates a gaping hole with a smaller head or six-legged spider inside. On the white upper portion of the page L created a network-like diagram drawing in which she had written words relating to her symptoms and discomfort including: "cough", "total loss of appetite", "heart palpitations", "depression", "sweating and (in bright red pen and uppercase) DIGESTIVE PROBLEMS". Each word was given its own space or bubble which seemed to billow over top of the next like storm cloud or a frothy pot of pasta water boiling over.

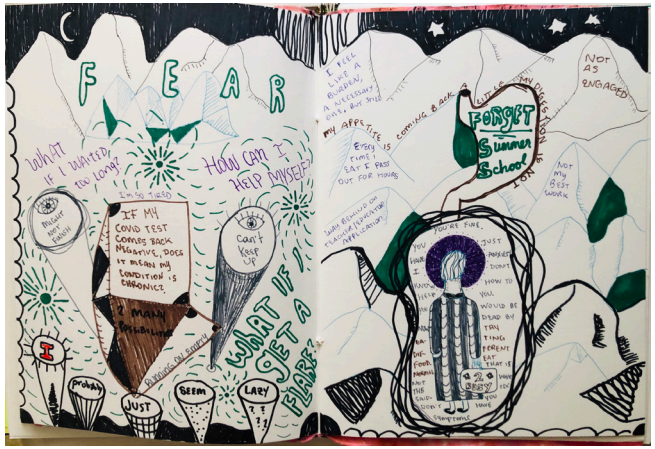

Figure 3. *L's visual journal response to "fear". Marker drawing of an anthropomorphic mountain and figure with its back to us, halo, and stomach*

L's last journal entry was the fourth, "fear", (see Figure 3) and in it she again used the full spread of two internal pages and continued the network of lines creating connected spaces with words inside each space. This time the lines also formed a mountain set against a black marker sky with a moon and three stars. Like the star that illuminates the mountains, which are the backdrop to the city where we live, L suspended the bubble letters "F E A R" across one side of the mountain. On the left-hand page, she has drawn eyes projecting out of holes in the mountain that on one hand look like search lights and on the other (because there are only two) appear to anthropomorphize the mountain. Written inside each eye respectively is the following: "might not finish," "can't keep up." Other concerns fill the page such as, "What if I waited too long," "HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF?" "I'm so tired," "I probably just seem lazy," "WHAT IF I GET A FLARE?" and "IF MY COVID-19 TEST COMES BACK NEGATIVE DOES THAT MEAN MY CONDITION IS CHRONIC?"

The page on the right-hand side contains a figure wearing a striped robe with their back to us. A religious looking halo in black marker surrounds their head and they are holding a bag or case that reads "2 BUSY" with two flowers on either side of the 2. The figure is encircled with thick dark lines and inside the space reads:

> YOU'RE FINE. YOU JUST HAVE ANXIETY. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO HELP YOU. YOU WOULD BE DEAD BY NOW. TRY EATING DIFFERENT FOOD EAT NORMAL THAT'S NOT WHAT THE CDC SAID. YOU DON'T HAVE SYMPTOMS.

Branching off of the thick-lined circle is a drawing of a stomach surrounded by the words: "My appetite is coming back a little my digestion is not." Littered around the page is the following: "Not as engaged," "not my best work," "way behind on teacher/educator application," "every time I eat I pass out for hours," and "I feel like a burden, a necessary one, but still."

Looking back on entry three and four (Figures 2 and 3) is especially difficult. I realize how little I understood what L was going through, and yet these works both effectively communicate her conscious (and unconscious) experience and are especially affective. The strange figure holding the cage seems to forebode the symptoms she is just beginning to articulate and of course they appear like a spider's webbing which harken back to the creature inside the figure's mouth. In the fourth response, again I am compelled by the figure. That its back is to us and its stomach is on display is especially heart wrenching when teamed with the words "my appetite is coming back and my digestion is not" and "everytime I eat I pass out for hours." The fearful mountain with eyes resonates like a surrealist, nightmarish take on the familiar sights of home. Returning to these images with the insight I have now reveals how much I missed, how important the body of the student is, in other words, that education is embodied, contextual, and affective. I see how much was at stake.

During this difficult time when many were experiencing trauma, fear, and other quite real and profound affects, I did not know the extent to which L's complaints would ultimately become grave. Even while using this visual journal practice designed to ask questions about student's affective experiences and to uncover the affective register in education, the asynchronous disembodied experience of education on a screen made it difficult to connect with my struggling students. Furthermore, the decontextualized nature of this research practice made it more difficult to interpret the affective in works of art. What I mean by this is that despite the richness of the examples shared in this paper, the asynchronous nature of this research practice prevented more embodied, shared, or contextual exchanges and understandings from unfolding, leaving me to sift through and connect the works to

sparse communications and to interpret the works alone. This practice is quite different from sketchbook research in early childhood art education (Cinquemani & Souza, 2022; Lewis & Rhodes, 2022; Park, 2022; Schulte, 2013; Sunday, 2015; 2018; Sunday & Conley, 2020; Thompson, 1995; 1999; 2009; 2017; Thompson & Bales, 1991) where sketchbook entries are residues of contextualized, embodied, and lively encounters between participants. While lively, rich, and valuable, in and of themselves, these visual journal entries are not as complete or as lively as the embodied, encounters possible in early childhood art education research.

L was young (an adult student in her early thirties) and my impression of her, formed mostly during the short period of in-person instruction, was that she was enthusiastic and artistic. She expressed a vivacity that projected those qualities into the future and foretold a future self that was palpable. In the end, if her illness had been COVID-19, the prognosis may have been different. Less than three weeks after her initial intake to the hospital, L was dead. She had suddenly and unexpectedly succumbed to breast cancer, and I found myself sending flowers to parents I had never met (and would never meet) and sharing the difficult news to a group of students who had only just begun to know her when the pandemic had separated us. It felt like there was no community and there was little to no protocol (or ritual practice) for how one might grieve a classmate or a student asynchronously. In a digital space of asynchronousity (how) does the body mourn? What does it mean to mourn alone? When there is no virtual body, no real student body, no student's body, what is the meaning of death? For me, her death confirmed not only the isolation and distance of asynchronous learning but also my deepest fear for my students and community during the pandemic; a mere threat had become a horrible reality (like many others').

Beyond the strange grief of the pandemic and of losing a student while in COVID-19 lockdown and learning virtually, and how that challenged the human in the digital space, my interpretation of L's affective fear and of my own might best illustrate the affective force of fear and possibly the affective quality of education. That we both feared that she had contracted COVID-19 and how that fear gripped us in light of another, more sinister (in her case) disease might best illustrate how something that is not material (she was not sick with COVID-19) could consume our fears so much so that it was the first assumption one would make when not feeling well. (To this day if I am not feeling well from flu or allergy symptoms my first assumption is COVID-19 even if it's quickly brushed aside as not a real threat; I am fully vaccinated). Despite never coming to fruition, the affective threat of COVID-19 was so real that, perhaps it subsumed L's ability to name any other threat. Although in her case the affective threat of COVID-19 may have become more of a hope or wishful reprieve from other real threats.

B's Initial Entry

B was at the bottom of my roster alphabetically and, after reviewing all the other responses, his was unexpected. He submitted far more image files than were necessary for the first response. Concerned that he had misunderstood the directions and placed all his journal responses in one file, I opened the files to see what he had done. I found that he did indeed understand the assignment and that he exceeded my expectations. His submission consisted of eight image files that told the story of B's fictional friend, an actual carrot aptly named Sgt. Gerald Quincy Pepper, presumably of the Lonely Hearts Club Band and both a reference to B's love of music and to a pervasive sense of loneliness that the pandemic wrought. I had asked students to utilize materials that they had at home because this would be what they would ask their students to do. B was one of a few students who utilized everyday objects in his entries and he certainly did so in creative and explorative ways- breaking the confines of the page to not only include Sgt. Pepper but other items like an out-of-commission Bic lighter, translucent yellow earplugs, printed photographs of a Red Hot Chili Peppers concert and of his girlfriend, and half of his old driver's license where he altered his photograph with a black Sharpie, darkening his eyebrows and chin line, adding a mustache and wavy lines that looked like dreadlocks and writing "HE IS COMING," effectively transforming his likeness to that of Jesus Christ.

B experimented with image and text and explored how visual journaling can be a process of residue and accretion. B's story of his friend St. Pepper utilized irony, humor, and play to connect the carrot's exploits to zombie movie plots and the Christian story of Easter. B used a real carrot and the other found objects in combination with his expressive drawing and image-making skills to relay his experiences of the pandemic, including his anxiety about leaving the house while simultaneously missing going out to see his favorite bands play. The woe of our homeboundness was told with humor (often through purposefully cheesy puns) and the rawness of his feelings and line work.

The story begins with a stark frontal image of someone wearing a hazmat suit with the words QUARANTINE written at the top like a title (see Figure 4). On the next page B included the full page spread about his girlfriend discussed below. At the top of the third entry (see Figure 5) is "QUARANTINE DAY 1" in large print, and below B created a to-do list with items checked off including: "SEARCH CABINETS FOR SUPPLIES," "TAKE STOCK," "THINK OF STUFF TO DO," and he detailed a sub list of the things to do: "LEARN GUITAR," "MAKE A FRIEND," "MAKE ART." Additionally, he has labeled and taped the following items to the page: carrot, lighter, old ID. At the top of the next page (Figure 6) is "QUARANTINE DAY 2" and B has used

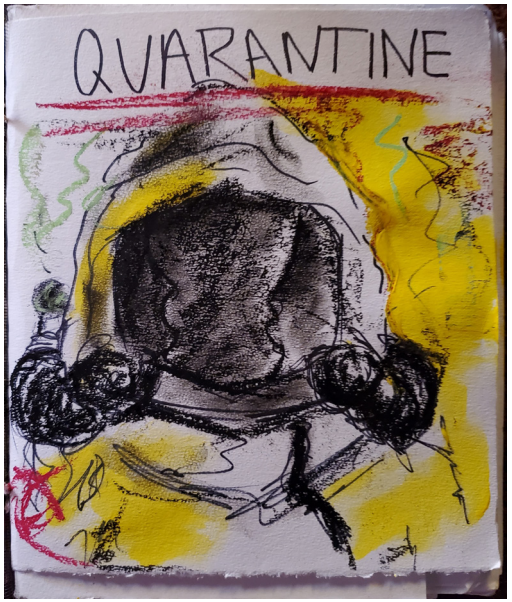

Figure 4. *Quarantine: B's reframing of the visual journal as a quarantine journal. First page showcases an expressive drawing of protective wear.*

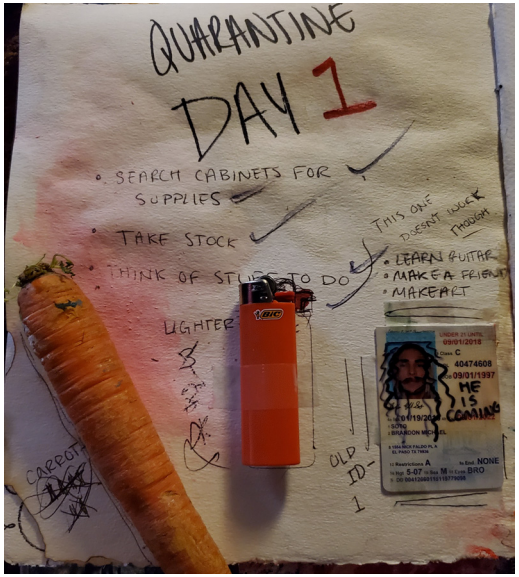

Figure 5. *Quantine Day 1: Making list and exploring found materials.*

a paint marker to draw a face with gaping open mouthed pink smile, cartoon eyes, and a multicolor bandana painted around its forehead. Stick figure arms with four fingers and a rudimentary speech bubble encompassing the words "HEY THERE!" Here B introduces the reader to SGT. PEPPER stating:

> TODAY MY PEN RAN OUT SO I STARTED TO USE THIS PENCIL I FOUND. ALSO I DECIDED I WAS GOING TO MAKE A FRIEND,[3] HIS NAME IS SGT. PEPPER… YES LIKE THE BEATLES. PS. I ALSO HAVE A SHARPIE AND SOME PAINT.

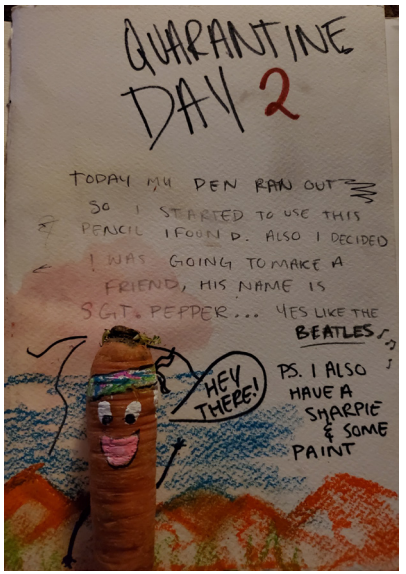

Figure 6. *Quarantine Day 2: Introduces Sgt. Pepper- the COVID-19 carrot.*

Here B's humor belies the difficulty we all were experiencing and calls to the power of art to frame or reframe not only our thinking but our perspective. The longing for a friend is remedied by the literal making of a friend through this journaling practice, but what is also important to sense here is the shared longing that shimmers beneath this humorous and witty practice.

The next entries begin to skip over days, with many days between entries. "QUARATINE DAY 3" & "QUARANTINE DAY 14" detail

3 Note the call back to the to do list from the previous entry and the twisting of notion of making a friend.

imaginative musings of communal practices. Day 3 (see Figure 7) we attend a Red Hot Chili Peppers concert with Sgt Pepper who is placed against an actual concert photo and pair of translucent yellow ear plugs and drawn taking a selfie. Day 14 (see Figure 8) we share a meal with Sgt. Pepper, although the words relay a foreboding tone : "ITS BEEN TWO WEEKS SINCE THE LOCKDOWN BEGAN… I CAN'T BELIEVE IT ALL WENT DOWN SO FAST. THEY DROPPED THE BOMBS!!! GETTING HUNGRY…"

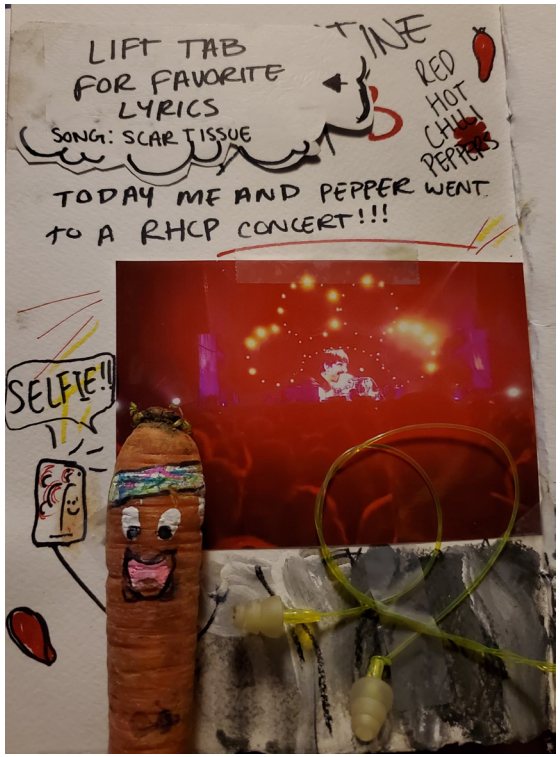

Figure 7. *Attending a concert with Sgt. Pepper.*

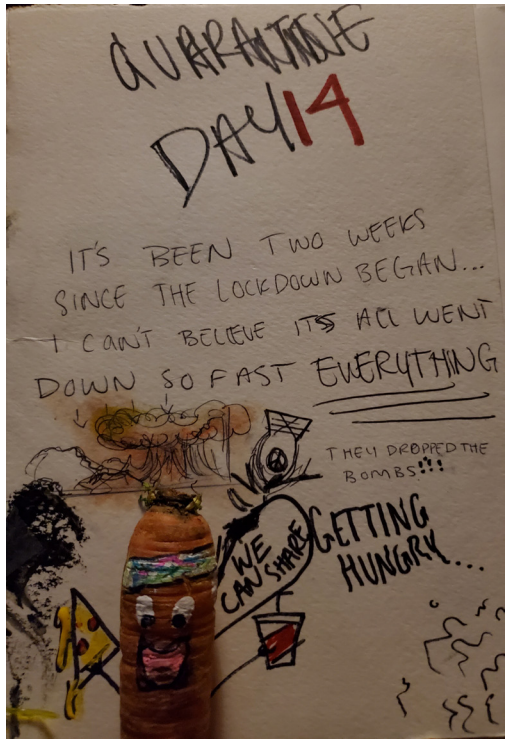

Figure 8. *Quarantine Day 14: Two weeks in quarantine and St. Pepper's cracks are beginning to show.*

The following entry, "QUARANTINE DAY 18", is another full page spread and has less text. On the left-hand side of the page (see Figure 9) are made-up symbols against a red wash of paint and the words "VENTURED OUT TODAY FOUND THESE MARKINGS. SHOULD WAIT A FEW DAYS BEFORE GOING OUT AGAIN" are written in Sharpie at the bottom of the page. Less noticeable in the top right corner of the page are the words "WE ATE PEPPER." On the right-hand page (see Figure 10) B had drawn what looked like two thought bubbles, one containing a cooking pot with actual cut cross sections of carrot depicted going into the drawn pot and the other the image of a gravesite under a shade tree. Both were drawn emanating from Sgt. Pepper depicted in a casket who clearly had a bite taken out of his head and shoulder and whose painted eyes and mouth had been replaced with Xs and a line, respectively indicating his death. Included on the page (see Figure 11) was a fold out portion made of lined paper that contained Sgt. Pepper's eulogy which thanked God for "his bountiful sacrifice."

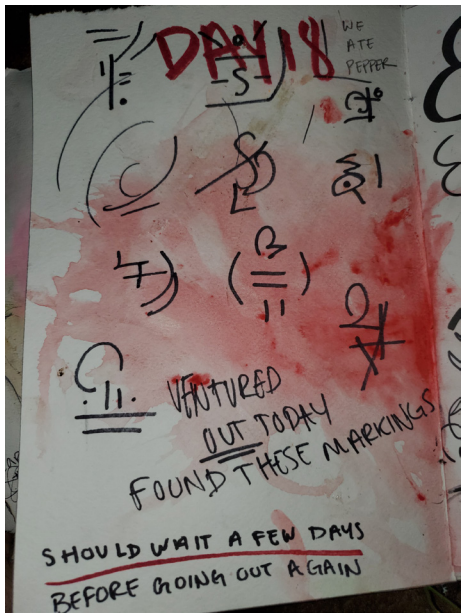

Figure 9. *Day 18: Markings found.*

Figure 10. *Day 18 (cont.) St. Pepper is dead and is laid to rest in a tasty stew.*

Here the story then morphed to reference Easter (which was approaching quickly). As the carrot leaves his house, he is bitten (B takes a literal bite out of his carrot friend) and we are concerned that our companion is lost, we witness his funeral and in "DAY 22's" entry (see Figure 12) B proclaims using a yellow paint marker against the stark banding of black masking tape:

HIS FLESH
HAS
BEGUN
TO
ROT!

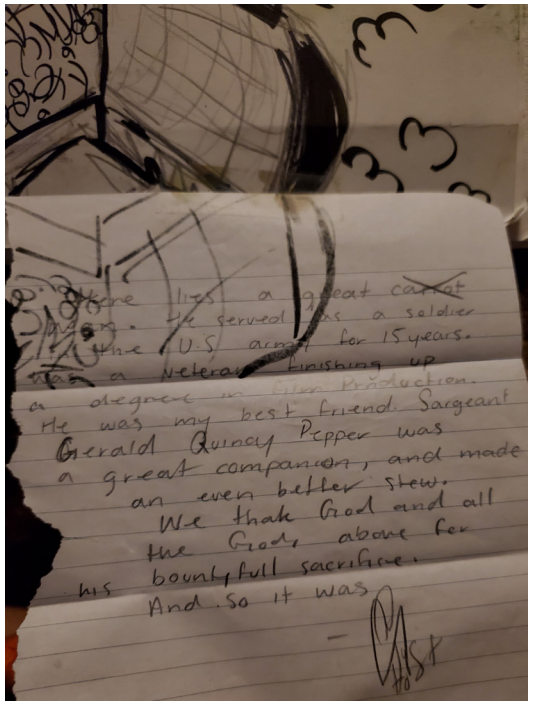

Figure 11. *Day 18 (cont.) St. Pepper's eulogy unfolded.*

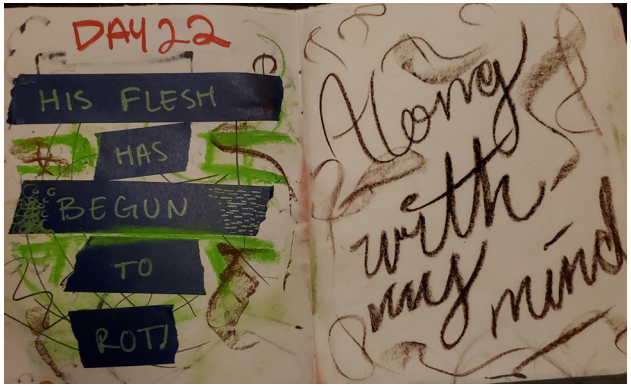

Figure 12. *Day 22: Two page spread humorously connecting the zombie plot to B's state of mind.*

On the accompanying page, using large cursive writing and dark charcoal that takes up the entire page, B exclaims, "Along with my mind". Here again, B uses humor to explore and express what we collectively experienced – the difficulties of confinement during the pandemic. Miraculously and in a springtime and quasi-religious reference on the next page, "DAY 26" (Figure 13), he is reborn like Jesus, but as a zombie carrot. B uses red marker claiming, "HE HAS RISEN!!!" He has righted the once eternally-horizontal carrot and drawn two stick figure arms grasping for "BRAAIIINNSSS!!!" written shakily in a speech bubble protruding from the carrot. "THERE IS ONLY ONE THING LEFT TO DO…" is written at the top of the corresponding page (Figure 14) and in the bottom portion B has drawn a gun and written the onomatopoeia "BANG" surround by a jagged bubble. Sgt Pepper's arms are drawn back against the force of the explosion and chewed pieces of carrot have been glued to the page to illustrate its finality.

In a kind of aside within the story of Sgt. Pepper (see Figure 15), B used a full page spread to explore the additive diaristic qualities of the medium and test the complexity of its storytelling chops. B pasted a picture of his girlfriend on the right-hand page and on the left-hand side he wrote in thick sharpie marker, "The only awful thing about this quarantine is that I can't see my Girlfriend. I Still dream of her face though…" On the right-hand side with a different implement and in the margin between the picture and the edge of the page he continues "OTHER THAN THAT EVERYTHING IS FINE (:)". Below that written with still another pen, this time a disposable ball point, he concludes, "IM PROBABLY GONNA DIE". Despairing, funny, and ironic, his words tickle the range of pandemic experience and bring a little levity. It is not clear if he thinks he will die from the pandemic or

Figure 13. *Day 26: Pepper is reborn as a zombie carrot just in time for Easter.*

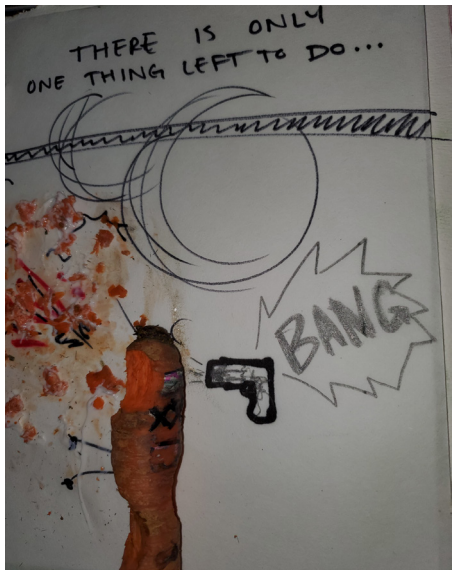

Figure 14. *Day 26 (cont.) St. Pepper has been shot.*

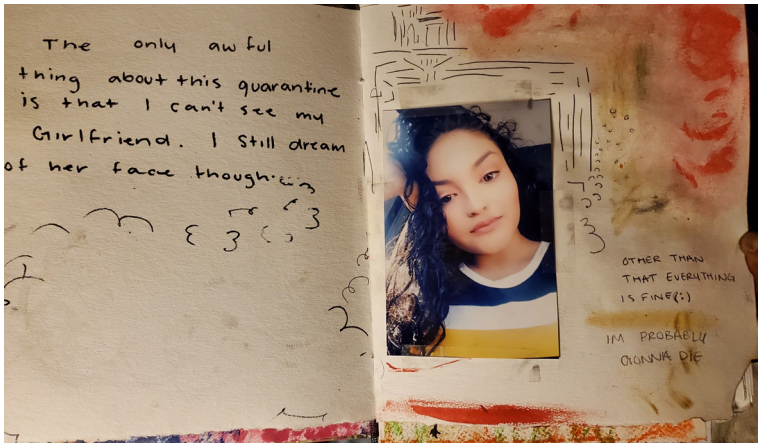

Figure 15. *Image of B's Girlfriend.*

their separation, but by combining the serious with the silly we are able to gain perspective to see the affective threat and to weigh or mitigate its affects, and through that possibly alter its products.

Both B's expressive playfulness and his inventive exploration of the visual journal medium in the face of the scarcity of pandemic lockdowns went beyond my expectations for the first submissions. He had embraced the visual journal not only as a place to explore how image making, writing, and storytelling could help process affective qualities of the pandemic, but the visual journal became a space in which to communicate the affective qualities of play and artmaking. The examples above illustrate the potential of the visual journal to provide a space to process and to produce differently through making, reimagining, and rethinking. Here, rather than ignore the affects and products of a pandemic education, B explores, tests, and plays with them as material for making art and making new.

Ultimately, what I found so unexpected and compelling about B's entries was not the workload (that he had done more than expected), but that he was able to make me see the unexpected. His work shimmered not because it was excessive but because it helped me to see the excesses that education during a pandemic had asked us to ignore while muddling and struggling through. B had made me laugh and reminded me of my own playfulness and the importance of affective spaces of play, humor, and artmaking for processing and producing anew. Recall that because of my own experience of the excesses of educating during the pandemic (isolation, dread, timelessness, etc.) I had been reluctant to review my student's work, and as a result I had waited longer than necessary to respond to their posts. When I was struggling with the black box nature of asynchronous teaching, B's response reminded me of the impact of community (even if it is a virtual one) and the way that play, humor, and artmaking can make and remake spaces of conviviality (Sunday, 2015).

Conclusion

The fear associated with the early COVID-19 lockdown functioned much like the threat Massumi (2010) describes of WMDs during the second Gulf War.[4] Neither was any less real because it had yet to produce what it threatened; rather, they were real because of what their threat produced. L and B's visual journal entries helped me to realize how the threat of COVID-19 produced certain affective educational realities in myself and for my students. It revealed a latent, excessive layer of education not usually attended to as part of everyday (Cartesian) educational practices that are concerned with the development of the mind and cognitive realm. My students' journal entries and my attunement to my own affective responses to them helped me to see how visual journaling can attend to educational excesses in ways that traditional sketchbooks (and art assignments) are not often asked to. Moreover, the process of visual journaling during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, a highly uncertain education moment, helped to uncover the latent affective force of education. Despite our attempts to normalize, disguise, anesthetize, or bury it, education's emotional affective content shimmered through and became sensible, embodied, and aesthetic.

When I asked the questions: What kinds of things should be taught, expressed, examined, or understood during a global pandemic?" "Can and should education proceed as usual without attending to the emotional affective force of things where uncertainty, anxiety, fear, isolation, sickness, and death marked everyday experience?" I was really wondering how one might proceed as usual in spite of major material and affective changes in society and if we might finally address the affective in education. This study was in part to confirm the excess and immensity of that change in society and in education. Through considerations of how visual journaling could be used as a pedagogical and research tool to reveal the affective in education I uncovered how fear of COVID-19 constituted what Massumi (2015) described as an affective threat and how the asynchronousness of online learning formed a kind of empty, disembodied education, revealing education's, students', and teachers' connection to embodiment and the affective register.

4 The supposed detection of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) in Iraq supported President George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, beginning the second Gulf War. It would be revealed later there were no WMDs (Cozens, 2004). Massumi (2010) argues that despite their being no actual weapons, the threat manufactured the same affective concern as if there were weapons.

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